

**Pol 196E: Research Methods for  
Political Science and Public Policy**  
University of California Center Sacramento  
Zoom Video: Friday 1 pm - 3 pm

**Instructor:** Dr. Ross Butters

**Email:** rbutters@ucdavis.edu

**Office:** Zoom Video with Meeting ID TBD

**Office Hours:** Wed. 9-10 am, 11-12 pm (and by appointment)\* Subject to change

**Course Objectives:**

This course is designed to bridge the internship experience with the academic study of related disciplines such as political science and public policy. The ability to translate empirical evidence for use in policy debates is central to policymaking. As a member of the policy community students require a sophisticated understanding of a variety of types of data and policy analysis. This course will introduce strategies for data analysis and collection, study design, and principles for evaluating research. Topics will include: experimental design, case study evaluation, small-n studies, survey and questionnaire design, sampling, measurement construction and reliability, formal modeling, and hypothesis testing.

**Course Policies:**

*Attendance, Participation, and Assignments:* Class attendance and the corresponding weekly **Wednesday Speaker Series Lectures are mandatory**. To receive credit for attending the lecture you must submit a paragraph assignment to sawilson@ucdavis.edu by the **Friday** after the webinar. For this assignment, you need to write a single paragraph describing your favorite part of the Speaker Series talk. These will be graded only for completion of the assignment and are separate from the Speaker Series Analysis assignments described below.

Students should register for the class's Zoom video sessions beforehand. On Zoom, students should register using both their first and last name and turn both their audio and video on. Attendance at class will be automatically recorded.

Students that constructively contribute to class discussion most regularly and fully participate in other in-class activities will receive a boost to their attendance and participation grade. Students that do not contribute to in-class discussion or fully participate in other in-class activities will receive a lower grade. **Any student that has three or more absences will not be able to receive a passing grade for the class.** Arriving 10 minutes late to class will count as an absence.

The course's Zoom Meeting link is TBD.

*Late Policy:* Late assignments will be penalized 5% for each day they are late, including weekends. Extensions will be allowed only in the event of a medical or family emergency.

The emergency must be documented [doctor's note] in order to be able to have an extension. If documentation is provided, then a decision will be made regarding whether you will be granted an extension. Any requests for an incomplete must be accompanied by a written medical report.

*Grade Appeals:* Students will have one week from when grades are posted to appeal their grade. All appeals must include a typed, double spaced statement explaining why you are requesting a grade appeal, and you must justify with evidence from your exam, paper, or summaries. If you choose to appeal your grade, the instructor reserves the right to increase or decrease the existing grade.

### **Academic Honesty:**

It goes without saying that all of your graded work must be done by you without assistance from others. You are encouraged to discuss the class and materials with others, but your answers to exam questions and your written essays must be yours and yours alone, with proper attribution for sources you wish to cite. If you are unfamiliar with the University's policy on academic dishonesty and associated penalties, see Code of Academic Conduct.

### **Reporting Duties:**

Please be advised that UC Center Sacramento professors, instructors, teaching assistants, and administrators are mandatory reporters under Title IX. This means that we are required to pass on reports from students, whether communicated verbally during class discussion or office hours or as part of a written assignment or exercise, to the UC Davis Title IX officer and other relevant UC Davis officials. If you wish to seek out help or resources with a non-mandated reporter, please see Confidential and Non-Confidential Support Services.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Any student who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements in order to meet any of the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodation for individual learning needs. UC Davis will make every attempt to accommodate all qualified students with disabilities.

### **Grading Policy:**

- Attendance and Participation 10%
- Assignments 10%
- Speaker Series Analysis (x2) 10%
- Policy Research Poster Data Proposal 20%
- Policy Research Poster Rough Draft 20%
- Policy Research Poster 30%

During the course of the quarter students will complete out-of-class **assignments** designed to help them with their Policy Research Poster and overall research projects. Assignments will be completed independently or in groups. These assignments may include producing and critiquing graphics related to student projects or evaluating current policy proposals in California or the United States, among others.

Students will also complete **two Speaker Series Analysis papers** (1-1.5 pages) based on the Wednesday Speakers Series Lectures. The analysis papers will not only encourage attendance at the Speakers Series but will also give students a chance to develop their analytical skills. The objective of these papers is to critically analyze and not just summarize the presentations. These papers should emphasize assessing the research procedures presented in the Lecture with an eye toward applying potential research outcomes. Using concepts discussed in class, analysis papers may evaluate the conception, operationalization, and measurement of important variables; suggest hypotheses for future research; discuss potential alternative explanations for findings or ways to approach the topic of research; and discuss potential implications for these findings for California and the United States, among others.

Again, your **Speaker Series Analyses** serve a very specific purpose: to enhance the analytical skills you may use now or in the future to help policy professionals decide what to do next. Put differently, think of these assignments as something like a short policy brief. Policy briefs provide a concise summary of information as well as best practices used to determine the optimum policy path forward. Speaker Series Analyses are due on Canvas one week after the presentation for which you are writing on. One Analysis must be completed before the end of week 4. Late assignments will be penalized 5% for each day they are late, including weekends. Attendance is required at all of the Wednesday Speaker Series events (private lunches and public talks).

During the fourth or fifth week of the quarter, students will submit a 2 page **Policy Research Poster Data Proposal** via Canvas. The proposal will outline the data you intend to use or collect and provide a road map for your analysis.

The **Policy Research Poster** is designed to provide students with a critical learning experience as well as an opportunity to engage in active research. For the poster you are required to conduct an original research project where you will gather, analyze and report on an important public policy issue in California. The original research for this project will be done in conjunction with your research for other UCCS courses. This **Policy Research Poster** will be presented at the end of the academic quarter. A **Policy Research Poster Draft** will be due after the eighth week of class.

Additional information on the poster and presentation will be provided in class and made available on Canvas. The **Policy Research Poster** will be due, via Canvas, during the last week of the course. All work must be in line with the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct.

Finally, to receive credit for attending the weekly Wednesday Speaker Series Lectures, students must submit a **paragraph assignment** to sawilson@ucdavis.edu by the Friday after the webinar. For this assignment, you need to write a single paragraph describing your favorite part of the Speaker Series talk. These will be graded only for completion of the assignment and are separate from the Speaker Series Analysis assignments.

**Tentative Course Schedule:**

- Week 1: Identifying the Focus of Research
- Week 2: Data, Research Design, and Experimental Methods
- Week 3: Observational Studies
- Week 4: Surveys and Qualtrics
  - Policy Research Poster Data Proposal due
- Week 5: Measurement Construction
- Week 6: Policy Research Posters
- Week 7: Data Visualization and ArcGIS
- Week 8: Data Analysis
  - Policy Research Poster Rough Draft due Sunday
- Week 9: Elevator Speeches and Practice Poster Presentations
- Week 10: Case Study TBD